The (Not So) Hidden Media Agenda

BY **GUESTPOST** - JUNE 2, 2019

A photojounalist takes photos of Palestinian protesters during a violent demonstration in eastern Jerusalem. May 13th, 2011. Photo by Ruben Salvadori / Flash 90

Does the media have a hidden agenda when it comes to Israel? Jodie Cohen, a public affairs professional recounts her own personal experiences working for and with the media.

What I'm about to write doesn't apply to all media. However, over the past two decades of working with the media, whether directly or in a public relations capacity, I've definitely noticed an unwritten code.

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When it comes to Israel, many media outlets have a pre-written agenda. This won't come as any surprise, of course, to followers of HonestReporting. But I thought it was worth recording my experiences…

Roll back twenty years. I was a bold, carefree, fearless student at Manchester University in the UK. I decided to spend a summer in Jerusalem getting some work experience. (These were the days when I wanted to be a foreign correspondent.) I approached two major UK news channels and got accepted for internships at both.

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I arrived at the first, hungry to learn and quickly volunteered to accompany the reporter to a riot in Ramallah. But what I saw when we arrived surprised me. There was no riot going on. There was a bunch of people hanging about, waiting for the cameras to arrive. When we did (and our flak jackets and helmets were safely in place), only then did they start to throw stones and glass bottles. And as soon as we left, the 'rioters' left too.

I asked the reporter if that often happened, and he confirmed that, yes, that was generally the way it worked. So the foreign media unwittingly became a partner in stone and bottle throwing riots against Israel. If the cameras hadn't arrived, arguably the riot I witnessed might never have happened.

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I remember a conversation with the reporter on the way back. I asked him why many people perceived his news channel to be biased against Israel. He replied that the British people like to support the underdog. That's why, until 1967, people admired this plucky, young state. However, post-Six Day War, the tides began to turn, and the Palestinians began to be viewed as the underdog.

The perception of Israel, of a small state (David) surrounded by its enemies (Goliath), changed. Now Israel was seen as the Goliath, battling the Palestinians, who were the new David. Over the years, many in the media have lost this perspective of Israel surrounded by hostile neighbors. They see instead Israel's strength. The IDF would say this is positive, as Israel can't afford to look weak in the eyes of its enemies. However, the flip in perception has underlined an unwritten new agenda on the part of some in the media.

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At my second internship, I witnessed something that I never wished I'd see. The studios were close to Mahane Yehuda, the market in Jerusalem. Every day at 1pm I'd leave my office and take a short walk down to the market. I'd go to the same market stall each day and buy vegetables, and then return to the office to make a salad.

That day, I was told that our plans had changed and we were unexpectedly going to down south to film at an army base. On our return journey, we found out that a suicide bomber had detonated an explosive at Mahane Yehuda – just after 1pm.

We headed for the market and I arrived to see the market stall where I went each day, covered in black and red, with the pulp from the vegetables streaming down the street along with blood from the victims.

The shock that I should have been there didn't hit me until later. What I noticed over the next few days, alongside the worldwide coverage of the attack, was how the media went very quickly from being sympathetic to critical, as Israel took measures to try to prevent more attacks.

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Fast forward over a decade, and I was working for a public affairs consultancy. One of my clients at the time was one of the first charities to promote nonviolence among the Palestinians. My role was to help launch the organization, raising awareness in parliament and in the media.

I remember phoning up journalist after journalist with this positive news story. Take up was very low. One reporter in the newsroom of a major TV channel explained. She said to me that they weren't really interested in stories like this, but that I should go back to her with any stories I might hear of about Palestinian suffering.

So there I was, telling the media about this positive initiative, which promoted nonviolence among the Palestinians and dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis, and all the reporter indicated they were interested in were negative stories.

This showed me that many in the media have a set agenda when it comes to Israel. The narrative has to follow this agenda or it won't get coverage. Over the years, my experiences have been reinforced by media article after media article, often showing one-sided reporting, inaccuracies and unreported facts.

With social media, the world has got smaller. An article with inaccurate reporting can be shared across continents, having an impact far bigger than in the past. That's why the work of HonestReporting is so important. Not only for Israel, but to shine a light on journalism, raising standards, and ensuring that the truth is told.

Jodie Cohen is a public affairs consultant with over 20 years' experience working with multinational companies, advising on public affairs, public relations and corporate communications.

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Brent Hui

"They see instead Israel's strength. The IDF would say this is positive, as Israel can't afford to look weak in the eyes of its enemies. However, the flip in perception has underlined an unwritten new agenda on the part of some in the media."

This 1 paragraph sums up Israel's dilemma. When Jews are "weak", nobody cares. But when Jews are "strong", when they dish out as good as they get, SUDDENLY everyone cares!

Great contribution Johen!

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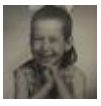

Tricia Roth

Important article. Thank you for writing and reporting it.

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Tony Riley

I always think you should "name and shame" people who say the sort of things the woman at that channel said.

Put them on the back foot.

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Sandra Cowley

The gentleman who wrote the reasons why Arabs claim the Temple Mount is mistaken. According to the biography of Muhammad that I read, he flew OVER the Mount and never set foot on it. Furthermore, to all those reading this article, surely, in any type of fairness no matter your religion, the facts are that the Temple Mount has been Israel's holiest site for over three thousand years! Muhammad lived in the sixth century - hence the beginning of Islam. Who else but the Jews have a right to this holy mountain?!! Furthermore, Islam has two - TWO - holy sites (Mecca AND Medina): the Jews have … See More

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HY Goh

Mainstream Western Media has sank to the very depths of deceit and immorality for half century now. It doesn't bode well that they are still dominant. People are still easily fooled by lies and propaganda.

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John Preller

Keep up with your Honest reporting stick to the truth and not the negative naratives against Israel a small start up nation surrounded by over 56 million Arabs who are determined to destroy the Jewish legally founded state of Israel. The Jews are defending their right to exist, the Israeli's are not attacking they are defending themselves against groups who want to destroy them, the Jews are fighting a defensive war started by blood thirsty nations hell bent on world domination. Remember the second world war comment "first they came for us, then they came for every one else" That is the game plan of Israels enemies. Beware, Be alert and dont be deceived by empty promises of peace. wa all face a common enemy who wants world domination and power.

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